

Message Text

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PAGE 01 WELLIN 03597 130645Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SOE-02 AID-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00
COME-00 DODE-00 EB-08 DOE-15 H-02 INR-10 INT-05
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-05 ICA-20 OES-09
SP-02 SS-15 STR-07 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 /140 W
-----121070 141348Z /44

R 122127Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5876
INFO AMEMBASSY SUVA
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

UNCLAS WELLINGTON 03597

E.O.11652:N/A
TAGS: ENRG, TN, NZ
SUBJECT: TONGAN OIL PROSPECTS

REF: (A) CANBERRA A-114, (B) WELLINGTON 2082

1. REF A. REPORTS REGIONAL RESOURCES ATTACHE'S (RRA)
LACK OF SUCCESS IN ELICITING INFORMATION ON THE RESULTS
OF THE INITIAL OIL DRILLING VENTURE INITIATED BY WEBB
RESOURCES IN TONGA IN EARLY MARCH. IN HIS MESSAGE RRA
SURMISES THAT FOR SOME REASON WEBB IS KEEPING THE RESULTS
OF ITS DRILLING SECRET.

2. IN ACTUAL FACT THE PROGRESS OF WEBB'S OPERATIONS
HAS BEEN REASONABLY WELL KNOWN, HAVING BEEN REPORTED ON
REGULARLY IN THE PAST BY AMEMBASSY SUVA AND PRESENTLY BY
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON. REF. B. SENT TO ALL ADDRESSES
GIVES OUR LATEST ANALYSIS, RESULTING FROM AMBASSADOR'S
LAST VISIT TO TONGA.

3. SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

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(A) DRILLING BEGAN ON THE KUMIMONU NO. 2 WELL AT
FUA'AMOTU, REFERRED TO IN REF A. ON APRIL 17, BUT THE
DRILLING SITE WAS DECLARED DRY ON MAY 11. DRILLING CEASED
AT 6,984 FEET, THE LAST 100 FEET BEING THROUGH BASE ROCK.
THERE WAS NO INDICATION OF THE PRESENCE OF A LIMESTONE
REEF, THE FORMATION IN WHICH THE OIL IS BELIEVED TO BE
CONTAINED.

(B) THE THIRD WELL OF WEBB'S PROGRAM IN THE TOWN OF NUKU'ALOFA (KUMINONU NO. 3), ALSO MENTIONED REF.A., BEGAN ON MAY 26 AND ACCORDING TO THE LATEST INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US HAS REACHED A DEPTH OF 8,100 FEET WITH NO INDICATION THUS FAR OF OIL OR GAS DEPOSITS. IF KUMIMONU 3 TURNS OUT TO BE A DRY WELL, AS IS LIKELY, DRILLING OPERATIONS WILL PROBABLY CEASE TEMPORARILY WHILE AVAILABLE DATA IS EVALUATED, A PROCESS WHICH SHOULD TAKE SEVERAL MONTHS. ALTHOUGH IT NOW SEEMS LIKELY THAT ALL THREE SITES WILL BE DRY, WEBB TONGA STILL MAINTAINS A GLIMMER OF HOPE AND HAS STATED ITS INTENTION AT THE MOMENT TO CONTINUE ITS EXPLORATION PROGRAM.

4. EMBASSY COMMENT:

WE HAD BEEN WAITING UNTIL A FINAL EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM WAS FORTHCOMING BEFORE REPORTING, BUT FELT THIS MESSAGE NECESSARY GIVEN INDEPENDENT SUBMISSION OF REF. A. REF. A. ALSO RAISES THE QUESTION OF PROPER COORDINATION BETWEEN THE RRA AND EMBASSIES HAVING RESPONSIBILITIES IN COUNTRIES ON WHICH RRA IS REPORTING. BETTER COORDINATION WOULD BE PARTICULARLY USEFUL WHEN, AS IN THIS CASE, THE EMBASSY CONCERNED MAY BE ABLE TO BE OF DIRECT ASSISTANCE WITH DATA. DEPARTMENT'S AND RRA'S COMMENTS WOULD BE APPRECIATED. SELDEN
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: EXPLORATION, PETROLEUM PRODUCTS, PROGRESS REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978WELLIN03597
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780289-0180
Format: TEL
From: WELLINGTON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780767/aaaacefn.tel
Line Count: 94
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 19c97e76-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 CANBERRA A-114, 78 WELLINGTON 2082
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2028368
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TONGAN OIL PROSPECTS
TAGS: ENRG, TN, NZ
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/19c97e76-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014